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MILTON AND THE ART OF WAR

BY JAMES HOLLY HANFORD

No more interesting pages are to be found in Masson's *Life of Milton* than those in which the ever-curious and indefatigable biographer discusses the question of his hero's experience in arms. Were there good and valid reasons why Milton should have served in the Parliamentary army? Masson thinks that there were. Did he actually do so? Very properly but with evident reluctance he concludes that he did not. On the basis, however, of certain military details in *Paradise Lost* the biographer is assured that Milton must at some time in his life have acquired a practical knowledge of drill and manœuvres, and, from the evidence of a statement in the *Apology for Smectymnuus* he infers that he was actually under training with the London militia in 1642. The statement of Philips that there was in 1643 a project to make Milton an adjutant-general in Sir William Waller's army Masson dismisses as a myth. Finally, regarding the sonnet "On His Door when the Assault was Intended to the City," he apparently feels the possibility of drawing damaging inferences from it regarding the state of Milton's nerves and endeavors to forestall them by suggesting the conclusion that "the thing" was a jest or a semi-jest, written in mere whim, in answer to the banter of some of his neighbors.

Throughout this discussion Masson's aim is, as it should be, primarily biographical. The subject which he opens up is, however, of much wider scope, and Masson, in his preoccupation with questions of fact and with the desire to reveal a hidden episode of Milton's life quite fails to do it justice. Certain important aspects of the material he entirely overlooks, with the result that even his biographical inferences rest on insecure foundations. It is the purpose of this study to supplement these deficiencies by giving as comprehensive an account as possible of Milton's relation to the Art of War. This requires, first, a description of the poet's sources of knowledge in the field of military science, and, second, a fuller analysis of the military elements in his work. The biographical questions raised by Masson are to some extent involved, and I shall take occasion to suggest a revision of his conclusions, at least in so

far as they are affected by considerations of which he failed to take account.

I

For an explanation of the attention devoted by Milton to the acquisition of military knowledge it is necessary to go no further than his famous and characteristic definition of a complete and generous education as that which "fits a man to perform justly, skillfully and magnanimously, all the duties both public and private of peace and war."¹ Framing his own scheme of instruction in the spirit of this definition he inevitably assigned an important place to military studies. Philips lists among the works read by himself and his brother under Milton's tutelage Xenophon's *Institution of Cyrus* and *Anabasis*, Ælian's *Tactics* and the *Strategmata* of Frontinus and Polyænus, works which as we shall see were regarded in Milton's time as text books and not as classics, and Milton proposes for the ideal academy as outlined in the tractate *Of Education* a thorough training in the art of war, both through the study of these and similar authors and through actual exercises in arms and drill. The description of this part of his program is so important for the present study that it must be quoted at length:

About two hours before supper they [the students] are by a sudden alarum or watchword, to be called out to their military motions, under sky or covert, according to the season, as was the Roman wont; first on foot, then, as their age permits, on horseback, to all the art of cavalry; that, having in sport, but with much exactness and daily muster, served out the rudiments of their soldiership, in all the skill of embattling, marching, encamping, fortifying, besieging, and battering, with all the helps of ancient and modern strategems, tactics, and warlike maxims, they may as it were out of a long war come forth renowned and perfect commanders in the service of their country.²

Now it is obvious that the presence of military study and discipline in Milton's system is not, as Masson implies, necessarily the result of some accidentally acquired personal experience, or even of the posture of public affairs at the time when the tractate *Of Education* was written. It is an essential part of Milton's attempt to carry out consistently in a definite educational program

¹ *Of Education*, edited by Laura E. Lockwood (Riverside Literature Series), p. 9.

² *Of Education*, pp. 26-7.

the humanistic ideal, so nobly formulated by the scholars, philosophers, and poets of the Renaissance, of a trained leadership, in which practical skill is integrated with and based on liberal culture. In this ideal, as it was developed under classical influence on the groundwork of mediæval chivalry, the military element had always held a predominant place. Milton consciously subordinates it, but he does not discard it. Comparing his academy with those of the ancients he proudly boasts that he has surpassed them in comprehensiveness of aim.

Herein it shall exceed them, and supply a defect as great as that which Plato noted in the commonwealth of Sparta, whereas that city trained up their youth most for war, and these in their academies and Lyceum all for the gown, this institution of breeding shall be equally good both for peace and war.²

But if the military element was an integral part of Milton's ideal of a training for leadership it is not to be supposed that, while prescribing it for others, he would have failed to incorporate as much of it as was consistent with his particular bent and occupation in his own carefully elaborated plan for self-development. He had also special motives for continuing a study initiated under this general humanistic impulse beyond the years of his activity as student and schoolmaster. The events of his own time and his rôle as their interpreter demanded it; so also did his conception of the kind of preparation necessary for the writing of an epic poem: "industrious and select reading, steady observation, insight into all seemly arts and affairs." These and other related causes, coöperating with Milton's instinctive thoroughness and with his zeal for study, were calculated to be hardly less effectual than a definite intention to embrace a military career, in urging him forward to master at least the theoretical side of the art of war. The degree to which he actually did this is greatly underestimated by Masson, who speaks of the absurdity of supposing that Milton could have been considered fit for an important military office after a few months' drill under Skippon, aided by readings in Ælianus, Polyænus, and Frontinus.

Masson's error in judging the proficiency of Milton as acquired from books is no doubt due to a failure to take account of the character of military science in Milton's day. The study of the

² *Of Education*, 23-24.

military classics of antiquity, however superfluous it may be in the training of an officer at present, was then of the utmost practical importance. The application of the principles set forth in them had revolutionized the art of war in the early Renaissance and upon them the actual practice of Milton's time was based. They were therefore indispensable text-books for the soldier and as such they were edited and re-edited throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, with more or less adaptation to contemporary conditions but with little thought of their being superseded. A typical example of such application of a fundamental ancient treatise is Henri de Rohan's *Caesar*, translated into English in 1640 by John Cruso as "The Complete Captain, or an abridgement of Caesar's Warres, with observations upon them, together with a collection of the order of the militia of the ancients and a particular treatise of modern warre." John Robinson's "The Tactics of Ælian or Art of embattling an army after the Grecian manner, Englished and illustrated with figures and notes upon the ordinary motions of the Phalange," published in 1616, serves a similar purpose, the illustrative material being such as to bridge the gap between ancient and modern warfare and to enable the scholar-soldier to appropriate the skill and experience of antiquity for present use. From such standard works as these to the independent text-books of the Renaissance it is but a step. Even the most practical of them follow the classical authorities in a way which is sometimes the despair of the modern historian of military science.

It was not, however, the technical treatises alone which were considered relevant in the academic training of the soldier. All the accounts of ancient wars, descriptions and philosophies of discipline, incidents of battle, anecdotes and aphorisms of the great captains were regarded with almost superstitious veneration as essentials of knowledge for the modern man of war. Thus Robert Ward, a writer whom Milton knew and of whom I shall have much to say in a moment, while insisting on the need of experience and practice, assigns a place of first importance in the soldier's equipment to the "knowledge of the manifold accidents which rise from the variety of human actions, wherein reason and error hath interchanged contrary events of fortune." "And this knowledge," he adds, "is only to be gained in the registers of antiquity and history recording the passages of former ages, that their harms may be our warnings, and their happy proceedings our fortunate

directions." That this is no mere scholar's counsel is proved by the fact that the passage is echoed by so practical a soldier as General Monk in his *Observations upon Military and Political Affairs*, published in 1671 but written some twenty-five years before. "And therefore it is not only experience and practice which maketh a soldier worthy of his name, but the knowledge of the manifold accidents which rise from the variety of human actions is best and most speedily learned by reading history." The effects of insistence on this doctrine and, in general, of the esteem in which the classical authorities were held are well summarized by Fortescue, the historian of the British army. "Every soldier steeped himself in ancient military lore, and quoted the Hipparchius of Xenophon and the Tactics of Ælian, the Commentaries of Caesar and the expeditions of Alexander, Epaminondas' heavy infantry and Pompey's discipline. In a word Europe for two centuries went forth to war with the newest pattern of musket in hand, and a brain stocked with maxims from Frontinus and Vegetius, and with examples from Plutarch and Livy and Arrian."

From the viewpoint, therefore, of his own day Milton's exhaustive study of the Greek and Latin classics would have brought him into contact with all that was most important in the theoretical equipment of the soldier. The only question would be in regard to the degree of attention which he devoted to the military elements contained in them. Fortunately we have in the preserved notes from one division of his reading, recorded in his Commonplace Book,⁴ indisputable proof of the fact that knowledge of the art of war was one of the objects uppermost in his mind. There are in the notes, besides the entries on topics which relate to this subject in its more general aspect, as, for example, those under the headings "De Fortitudine," "De Duellis," "Amor in Patriam," "Astutia Politica," "Gymnastica," several pages devoted to questions more specifically military: "Disciplina Militaris," "De Bello," "De Bello Civili," "De Seditione," "De Urbe Obsidenda et Obsessa." Nearly all those notes are drawn from post-classical history, but Milton's interests would, of course, have been the same in the analogous ancient materials; if we possessed Milton's collections from Thucydides and Tacitus, and Polybius, as we do those from De Thou and Commynes and the English chronicles

⁴ Edited by A. J. Horwood for the Camden Society, 1877.

they would probably exemplify even more strikingly the degree to which this reading was regarded by him as affording precepts and instances applicable to the requirements of military leadership in his own time.

With the ancient works more specifically devoted to the art of war Milton was probably as familiar as any man of his generation. It is a striking fact that two of the three classical works cited in the Commonplace Book, Cæsar's *Commentaries* and Frontinus' *Strategmata*, are military treatises. These authors, together with Xenophon, Ælian, and Polyænus, Milton read, as we have seen, with his nephews. His knowledge of the other military classics of antiquity may be taken for granted, as may also his acquaintance with the older post-classical writers on the art of war which were placed by the Renaissance on an equality with the ancients themselves and were often contained in the same volumes with them. Thus Milton may well have used his Ælian in the Elzevir edition of 1613, in which is included the highly esteemed *Tactica* of the Emperor Leo.

Of more significance as showing that Milton's interest in these matters was technical as well as antiquarian and as furnishing sources of his knowledge of the actual practice of war in his own day is the evidence of his acquaintance with two of the outstanding modern treatises on military science, Machiavelli's *Arte della Guerra*, and Robert Ward's *Animadversions of Warre*. The *Arte* of Machiavelli, originally published about 1520, had become both because of the reputation of its author and because of its intrinsic excellence the most highly respected military document of the Renaissance. Rendered accessible in numerous reprints and translated into English by Peter Whitehorne in 1560, it continued long in use as a text-book. The interest of Machiavelli is in the organization and training of a national as opposed to a mercenary army. He looked to the creation of a military body possessed of the skill and animated by something like the spirit of Cromwell's Ironsides. Though not himself a soldier he had studied carefully the military works of the ancients and as a responsible official in the Florentine camp before Pisa he had seen some fighting, with the result that he had acquired a surprising knowledge, not only of the broad philosophy of success in arms, but of the technical detail as well. The work is one which would have commended itself to Milton by its style, its learning and its primary concern with questions of

morale and discipline. He twice cites it in the *Commonplace Book*,⁵ and there can be little doubt that the principles and details set forth in it with such clarity and force contributed in an important way to his technical knowledge of the subject. Contemporary editions of the *Arte*, in common with most of the other military works ancient and modern published in the later Renaissance, contained an abundance of diagrams and pictures. In one large design reproduced in Whitehorne's translation, presumably from some Italian edition, there is represented stretched out over a wide and varied landscape the whole panoply of war: great masses of infantry and cavalry, marching in columns and engaged in evolutions, with forests of spears and pennons, the confused activity of the camp, wagons, impedimenta, artillery, castles—in one corner a scene representing the execution of a traitor, and out on the distant battle front the actual clash of arms. The whole is well calculated not only to make clear the descriptions in the text, but vividly to impress the imagination as well. Milton may or may not have seen this particular design,⁶ but he certainly saw others similar to it.

In connection with this work mention should be made of Machiavelli's *Discorsi*, which Milton also read with care as is shown by the presence of numerous notes based on it in the *Commonplace Book*. The second and third sections of the *Discorsi* are primarily devoted to the subject of war and a majority of Milton's quotations from them concern matters of military technique and policy, as for example the statements set down on page 242 regarding the value of fortresses, the advantages of the offensive, and the superiority of foot to horse.

The other modern treatise cited by Milton in the *Commonplace Book* is deserving of more detailed consideration. I am not aware that it has previously been mentioned in connection with Milton.⁷

⁵ *Commonplace Book*, pp. 177 and 182. Both entries deal with questions of statecraft rather than of military science proper.

⁶ Milton's citations in the *Commonplace Book* are to a one-volume edition of Machiavelli's works which contains no diagrams: *Tutte le opere di Nicolo Machiavelli cittadino e segretario Fiorentino*, 1550.

⁷ Milton cites the work simply as "Ward. militar. Sect. 7," on page 18 of the *Commonplace Book* under the heading "De Fortitudine." Horwood, the editor of the *Commonplace Book*, apparently could not identify the reference; at least he omits Ward's volume in his list of authors cited by

The full title is as follows: "Animadversion of Warre, or A Militarie Magazine of the Truest Rules, and Ablest Instructions for the Managing of Warre, Composed of the most Refined Discipline and Choice Experiments that these late Netherlandish and Swedish Warres have Produced, with divers new inventions, both of Fortifications and Strategems, as also Sundry Collections taken out of the most approved Authors, ancient and modern, either in Greek, Latine, Italian, French, Spanish, Dutch, or English. In Two Books by Robert Ward, Gentleman and Commander, London. Printed by Francis Egglefield at the Sign of the Marigold in Paul's Churchyard, 1639."⁸ Comprehensive as this description is it is not more so than the book itself. It is indeed a military magazine, supplied with all conceivable varieties of the munitions of those days. Though overlooked by students of literature its value has long been recognized by the military historians and antiquaries. Cockle in his military bibliography describes it as the outstanding book of reference on nearly all branches of the military art, drawn from the best sources available and enriched by many excellent observations of the author. Aside from its technical and historical importance, however, Ward's work deserves a place in the annals of seventeenth century prose. The author writes in the capacity of a cultivated and learned gentleman as well as in that of skilled commander, and he has imparted to his treatise a decided literary and philosophical flavor. Several elegant dedicatory epistles to King Charles and others are followed by a seemly Latin poem entitled "Excertatus Sacer in XI Legiones et Lectiones ordinatus," by Ben Lowes, Turmae Equestris Praefectus, and then by some English verses "To our Countrymen in Foreign Service," of which the following may stand as a sample:

Milton, p. 64. The fact perhaps accounts for the failure of subsequent commentators to make use of so admirable an illustrative document in editions of Milton's works.

⁸ Copies of this work are rather rare. The one in the Library of Harvard College, which I have used, was purchased in 1646 by Robert Keayne of Boston, founder of the ancient and Honorable Artillery Company. Sold by his widow in 1656, it passed through the hands of John Leverett, President of Harvard College, whose signature on the fly leaf bears the date 1682, Edward Wigglesworth, first Hollis professor of Divinity, and the Rev. John Andrews of Newburyport, who donated it to Harvard Library in 1835.

Heere, may you fight by Booke, and never bleede:
Behold a wall blown up, and yet no Breach:
And hear the neighing of a still-borne steede:
And startle at an engrav'n canon's speeche.

Ward begins like all good warriors with the praise of peace, but he passes quickly to the inevitability of war, descanting rather loftily on the theme of the mutability of kingdoms. In the second section he discusses the means and provisions of war—victuals, weapons, shipping, and soldiers—inveighing against the inefficiency of the English train bands and painting a vivid picture of the unsoldierly character of the musters. Section III presents the elements of geometry, with a thorough and technical discussion of fortifications, artillery, and mines; sections VII-IX contain a fine treatment of the subject of morale and an analysis of valor and cowardice. There follow elaborate explanations of the duties of each particular office and of the regulations of drill, a discourse of “politique strategems” after the model of Frontinus and Polyænus (some of the instances are classical and threadbare, others new), and finally a detailed and curious description of all manner of engines and warlike implements. Book II is devoted to the office of general, with aphorisms drawn from Machiavelli and others, rules of march and camp, and descriptions of the various battle formations. The volume is profusely illustrated with useful diagrams and alluring prints and the text abounds in passages of genuine eloquence.

I have dwelt at some length on the characteristics of this work of Ward's because it is precisely the combination contained in it of scholarly thoroughness with philosophic breadth and largeness of utterance which would, I think, have particularly attracted Milton. He cites in the Commonplace Book but a single passage, but this is a characteristic and significant one: “the cause of valor a good conscience, for an evil conscience, as an English author noteth well, will otherwise knaw at the roots of valour like a worme and undermine all resolutions.” The whole section in which this passage is included is one which would have commended itself to Milton's way of thought. The soldiers' obedience, valor, and desert are grounded, says Ward, on the principle of showing their magnanimity to the utmost in the defense of religion, king, and country, and learning with their best endeavor the military art. To fear God and keep one's powder dry is the whole duty of the man of

war. It would have been with melancholy but not unsympathetic feelings that Milton read Ward's noble passage in praise of loyalty to the sovereign.

No kingdom so fortunate and happy as those where obedience flows in a clear stream; so far from the power of gusts and storms that gentle calms are perpetuated to times, and all seasons are as Halcyon days; when subjects of all conditions and in all respects sympathize with their sovereign in authority to his lawful behests and commands, as the shadow imitates the body, or as the parts of the body are ready bent to observe and execute the pleasures and intents of the heart and faculties of the mind.

One other quotation from the same part of the work may be given as an illustration of Ward's style and temper.

If one should but draw examples of obedience from the creatures, and observe how in all things they stand conformable and obedient to the laws of nature; how the great unruly ocean observes the course of the moon in bringing in her tides, the massie earth waits the time and pleasure of the sun's revolution, to yield up the fruit and hidden treasures contained in her bowells to the uttermost of her powers, all creatures, both vegetative and sensitive, are precise and ready bent in all obedience when nature enjoins; and yet man, a rational creature, most obstinate and heterogenous in his duty, loyalty, and obedience to his superiors, which nature doth not only challenge as a right, but God claims it as his due. And how silly are men above all other creatures in making provision for their safety. Their is no creature but nature hath armed it with some defensive weapon, not so much but the poor bee hath his pike, which most valiantly and skillfully he can use for his defense and preservation. But the times we live in are such that we have neither will nor skill, but we refer all to a general Providence, thinking it sufficient if they be roughcast with riches and prosperity.

Here are ideas which would certainly have interested Milton and accorded with his general philosophy. His specific indebtedness to Ward will be discussed in the second section of this paper. I am concerned at present only to show that Milton must have found the work not unworthy of his attention, and that in reading it he was brought into contact with the best that was known of military science in his own day, both in its technical and philosophic aspects.

There were, of course, many other English works which dealt with the theory and practice of arms. With some of these certainly and with many others very probably Milton had familiarized himself. Of the older treatises we know from a note in the Common-

place Book that he had read the *Toxophilus* of Roger Ascham. He could hardly have missed seeing the contemporary publications which proceeded from the press with ever-increasing rapidity as the nation drew on toward the civil war. Fifty-seven titles of English works purely military in character are listed by Cockle as appearing between the years 1626 and 1642, eleven of them being published in the latter year alone. One of these, John Cruso's *Military Instructions for the Cavalry*, containing some fine pictures of horse formations, had been issued at Cambridge in the last year of Milton's residence there, 1632. Milton is likely enough also to have read Henry Peacham's *The Compleat Gentleman*, published in many editions throughout his lifetime, with its chapters devoted to military discipline and the regulations of drill.

Such, then, are the sources from which Milton derived his textbook knowledge of the art of war. It may now be questioned whether he made any effort or enjoyed any opportunity to gain practical experience in arms, or whether the whole subject remained for him an academic one, included in his comprehensive program of study partly because a sound classical and humanistic scholarship demanded it, partly because he felt that his projected poetry might involve it, and above all because such knowledge was a necessary part of the equipment of one who planned to play a part of statesmanly leadership in the public affairs of his own time. In spite of all Masson has said there is not a particle of valid evidence that Milton ever underwent military training whether under Skippon at the beginning of the civil war or earlier during his school and college life. I cannot find that there was any such organization at St. Paul's as Milton projected for his own academy. At Oxford, in the crisis of 1642, there was, we know, a flare-up of military enthusiasm and the scholars deserted their books to "train up and down the streets" in preparation for the service of the king.⁹ But we hear nothing of any military feature at either university in the years of Milton's residence. In the trained bands, maintenance of which in city and country was required by law during the reign of Charles I, men of Milton's status were not expected to serve except as officers. There would seem to be little likelihood of his ever having appeared in Buckinghamshire during

⁹ Anthony Cooper, *Strategmata*, 1662, quoted by C. H. Firth, *Cromwell's Army*, 21.

the Horton period at one of the drunken musters described by Ward. By 1642 the military situation had become very different. In the city, indeed, there had long been a more vigorous interest in military preparation among the citizens. Little societies had been in the habit of meeting in the Artillery Garden in St. Martin's Fields to practice their drill under expert soldiers hired to instruct them, and the men thus taught became in their turn officers of the trained bands.¹⁰ Milton may, of course, have served his apprenticeship in arms in some such way as this, but there is no proof that he did so. In the activity which began with the outbreak of hostilities I think it extremely unlikely that he had any part. The rank and file of those at first engaged in drilling were, as is well known, men of very different character from Milton and his associates. Essex's army was in large part composed of city apprentices and country laborers—"decayed serving-men and unjust tapsters," as Cromwell remarked to Hampton. Even in the New Model the majority of the troopers are said to have been unable to write their names. It was not expected that gentlemen should serve in the capacity of private. Thus the Parliamentary impressment order of August 16, 1643, exempted clergymen, scholars, students in the Inns of Court and the universities, the sons of esquires, and persons rated at five pounds goods or three pounds lands in the subsidy books. For officers there was no lack of experienced men on either side from among the thousands of Englishmen who had seen service with the Dutch or the reformed princes of Germany, or from among the London citizens who had acquired military experience at home.

There remains the passage from the *Apology for Smectymnuus* cited by Masson as evidence that Milton was drilling in the year 1642. Milton is defending himself against the charge that his days and nights are spent in dissipation.

These morning haunts are where they should be,—at home; not sleeping, or concocting the surfeits of an irregular feast, but up and stirring,—in winter often ere the sound of any bell awaken men to labour or devotion, in summer as oft with the bird that first rouses, or not much tardier,—to read good authors, or cause them to be read, till the attention be weary or memory have its full fraught; then with useful and generous labours preserving the body's health and hardiness, to render lightsome, clear, and

¹⁰ C. H. Firth, *Cromwell's Army*.

lumpish obedience to the mind, to the cause of Religion and our country's liberty, when it shall require firm hearts in sound bodies to stand and cover their stations, rather than see the ruin of our Protestantism and the enforcement of a slavish life.¹¹

"This is interesting," says Masson. "Milton, it seems, has for some time been practicing drill." Obviously he has been doing nothing of the sort. He has been simply taking exercise, his life-long habit, as a relief from study and to preserve his health for the kind of service which he was then rendering and which he was later to render in his country's cause. Had he been under arms he would certainly have said so explicitly, either in this passage or in the later reviews of his creditable activities. The fact is that Milton had early concluded that the part he was to play in life was one which very definitely excluded the activity of camp or field. He carefully distinguished in his thought another soldiership and marked it from the beginning for his own.

For I did not so much shun the labours and dangers of military service as not, in another fashion, both to do work for my countrymen of a more useful kind. . . . Having from my earliest youth been devoted in a far more than ordinary degree to the higher studies, and having always been stronger mentally than in body, I disregarded camp-service, in which any common soldier of more robust frame could easily have been my superior and got means about me to the use of which I was more competent, so that I might in what I thought my own better and more effective, or at least not inferior way, be an acquisition of as much momentum as possible to the needs of my country and to this most excellent cause.¹²

This is as plain a statement as could possibly be desired. It implies not merely that Milton did not actually serve in the Parliamentary wars, but that he never intended or prepared to do so. In estimating the reasons for this decision we must give due weight to what he says of his physical condition as well as to the kind of reflection which made moral and intellectual service seem of equal or superior dignity and value to that of arms. We know, for example, not only that Milton was under middle height, but that he was weak in eyesight, that he had been subject to headaches from his youth, and that he suffered frequent illnesses throughout his life.¹³ He was not at the time in question necessarily unfit for

¹¹ Masson, II, 402.

¹² *Second Defense*, Masson II, 487.

¹³ Cf. *Epistle XI*: "First, the delay was occasioned by ill health, whose disabilities I have now perpetually to combat; next by a cause of ill health,

military service, but he was doubtless quite right in thinking that he would have been of little value as a fighter. I am quite persuaded, therefore, that Milton did not turn out with pike and musket in 1642, nor do I feel that his failure to do so needs any further explanation or defense than he has made for himself. As to the Turnham Green sonnet, the tone of which has been a stumbling block to some biographers, it is necessary only to understand the poem in order to divest it entirely of the sort of biographical significance which has been attached to it. Of course Milton did not post it on his door, but neither did he write it as a jest in the response to the banter of his friends. The possibility of identifying his own situation with that of Pindar awoke his imagination and resulted in an utterance of purely artistic significance. It is the poet in him who is speaking, with the poet's oblivion of everything except the immediate conception of his mind.

If, however, Milton was in all probability unacquainted with the practice of soldiership from actual experience it is not quite accurate to say that his sources of knowledge were wholly academic. On the one hand the physical recreations of a gentleman of Milton's time were much more than at present associated with arms. The very theory of sport, inherited from the Middle Ages and confirmed by the classics, was that it should constitute a preliminary training for military service,¹⁴ and this idea was firmly held by Milton. For the physical exercise of his academy he recommends in *Of Education* "first, the exact use of their weapon, to guard, and strike safely with edge or point, as a means of making students healthy, nimble, strong, and well in breath, and to inspire them with a gallant and fearless courage." Here we know that Milton had practiced what he preached. "I was wont," he says in the *Second Defense*, "constantly to exercise myself in the use of the broadsword, as long as comported with my habit and years. Armed

necessary and sudden removal to another house." Stomach trouble accompanied his disease of the eyes. Cf. *Epist.* xv. A severe sickness had preceded the writing of the *Defensio*. See introductory paragraphs of that work.

¹⁴ Compare Peacham, *Compleat Gentleman*, Chap. xvi, where various exercises, as tilting, running, swimming, shooting, hunting, are commended as a means of enabling the nobility for command and the service of their country. Precedents are cited from Cicero, Sallust, Cæsar and other ancient writers.

with this weapon as I usually was I should have thought myself quite a match for anyone, though much stronger than myself." The image of Milton practicing the young Philippses in the art of self-defense is a very pleasant one which it is surprising that Masson had not expatiated on. He had doubtless been taught fencing by some London master or at one of the fencing schools in the university,¹⁵ and this instruction involved a certain amount of training equivalent to drill. A statement of Toland suggests that he had been taught the use of other weapons as well, though it may simply be a generalization from the passage quoted. "His recreation before his sight was gone consisted much in feats of activity, particularly in the exercise of his arms, which he could handle with much dexterity." Milton's interest in Ascham's *Toxophilus* suggests that he may have practiced archery, an art recommended by Ascham primarily for its military value and not wholly obsolete for practical purposes in Milton's time. This was perhaps the sum of Milton's actual experience in arms, but it was enough when amended by the imagination, to give the art of war a certain reality in his consciousness which it would not otherwise have had. We must remember, also, that the atmosphere of Milton's mature years was charged with the intensest interest in military matters. The preparations of the Parliamentary forces must have met his attention on every side and he must have heard constant discussions of the progress of the war. Later he was associated with many of those who had been leaders in the struggle. His acquaintance with soldiers like Sir Henry Vane would have given him opportunity to learn at first hand of the operations of the civil war. In a time of actual warfare even the civilian who is deeply concerned in the outcome is infused with the martial spirit and may speak as familiarly of

Sallies and retires, of trenches, tents,
Of palisadoes, frontiers, parapets

as if they were his special province. These considerations should prepare us for almost any amount of military technicality in Milton's works without resorting to Masson's unfounded suppositions.

Before entering upon the discussion of this subject I wish to

¹⁵ Cf. Earle, *Microcosmographic*, xxv, *A Young Gentleman of the University*. "His father sent him thither because he heard that there were the best fencing and dancing schools."

consider for a moment Philips's surprising statement that there was at one time a project on foot to make Milton an adjutant general in Sir William Waller's army. I am far from certain that this should be so promptly dismissed as it was by Johnson and has been by all subsequent biographers. Philips is, to be sure, somewhat guarded in his statement but he gives details which it is hard to believe he deliberately fabricated. He says that the practice of Milton's design of founding an academy according to the model laid down in the tractate *Of Education* was afterwards diverted by a series of alterations in public affairs. "For I am much mistaken if there were not about this time a design in agitation of making him adjutant-general in Sir William Waller's army. But the new modelling of the army soon following proved an obstacle; and Sir William, his commission being laid down, began as the common saying is, to turn cat in pan." The chronology here is right enough. Milton's tractate was published in 1644; the self-denying ordinance deprived Waller of his command in February, 1645; and the New Model was created immediately afterwards. The grounds on which Masson rejects the possibility of such a thing are the inexperience of Milton and his manifest unfitness for an important military office. But it is by no means clear precisely what the term adjutant-general in Sir William Waller's army implied. No adjutants whatsoever are mentioned in the complete Parliamentary army lists of 1642. Such officers appear sporadically in the later organizations with duties rather ill defined. In the New Model the adjutant-general or general adjutant was an assistant to the commander of the cavalry, a superior aide-de-camp. "The Swedish Intelligencer" ¹⁸ speaks of the office in the following terms:

The General adjutant, that was Leiftenant to the Commissary [i. e. the chief officers of horse—not a commissary in the modern sense] was the Leiftenant Colonel to his regiment. The General adjutant's office, is to be assistant to the Generall: That is to be sent abroad for the giving or speeding of the Generall's commands to the rest of the armie. He is commonly some able man, or some favorite at least unto the Generall. His place in the Armie, is that of a Leiftenant Colonel; of whom he hath precedence, but is behind all Colonels. A General-adjutant is the same officer which in our English discipline wee call a corporal of the field. The French call him an aide-de-camp.

Under the terms of this description there is a conceivable place

¹⁸ Quoted by Firth, *Cromwell's Army*.

for a man like Milton. But it seems more likely that Philips is using the expression to describe some important semi-civilian function on the general staff, and is dignifying it with a well sounding title. Among the officers listed as belonging to the General's train in Essex's army there are the following: Treasurer at Warres, Muster Master General, Advocate of the Army, Secretary of the Army, Auditor of the Army. Is it not possible that Milton's services and known devotion to the Parliamentary cause might have been thought to entitle him to some such appointment? His purely academic learning, his knowledge of languages, the laws of war, historical precedent, and even, theoretically, of strategy and tactics, would have constituted qualifications of no mean order for purposes secretarial, advisory, or administrative which did not involve active participation in battle. While hesitating, therefore, to accept Philip's statement at its face value I am inclined to give it some weight; in any case in any case I should reverse Masson's conclusion that the tradition of a proposal to bring Milton in some capacity into the army of Sir William Waller is far less credible than that he should have been found serving at first in one of the regiments of the London train bands.

II

If it were possible to reason that a man must at some time have had actual military experience on the ground that he displays in his writings a competent and even a technical knowledge of the works of war, one would have little difficulty in establishing a case for Milton. The data is, indeed, much more extensive than Masson apparently realized. Much of the battle language which animates the utterance of Milton may, of course, be ascribed to the tradition Christian habit, founded on scripture, of applying terms of physical conflict to the realm of the spirit. Beyond this, however, Milton frequently in the course of ordinary speech slips into military phraseology of a more exceptional character. This is especially apt to occur when he is speaking of the operations of the mind in acquiring or defending truth. "Militaire men," he says in illustrating a point in *The Readie and Easie Way*, "hold it dangerous to change the form of battle in view of the enemy." Elsewhere he speaks of awaiting an opponent "at his foragings and waterings," of uniting "as those smaller squares in battle unite in one great cube, the main phalanx," of the "small divided mani-

ples" of the Protestant sectaries in their combined attack on the Church of Rome "cutting through his ill-united unwieldy brigade." Sometimes the military figure is elaborately developed, as in the following from *Of Education*:

In which methodical course it is so supposed that they [the students] must proceed by the steady pace of learning onward, as at convenient times, for memory's sake, to retire back into the middle ward, and some times in the rear of what they have been taught, until they have confirmed and solidly united the whole body of their perfected knowledge, like the embattling of a Roman legion.

Or in this memorable passage from the *Areopagitica*:

When a man hath been laboring the hardest labor in the deep mines of knowledge, hath furnished out his findings in all their equipage, drawn forth his reasons as it were a battle ranged, scattered and defeated all objections in his way, calls out his adversary into the plain, offers him the advantage of wind and sun, if he please, only that he may try the matter by dint of argument, for his opponent then to skulk, to lay ambushments, to keep a narrow bridge of licensing where the challenger should pass, though it be valor enough in soldiership, is but weakness and cowardice in the wars of Truth.

It is not, however, to such casual outcroppings of Milton's familiarity with the language of strategy and tactics, themselves a manifestation of the habit of technical expression characteristic of seventeenth century prose and poetry, that we must look for the really significant results of his studies in the art of war. Motivated, as I have said, by the intellectual and cultural tradition of the Renaissance and stimulated by the particular circumstances of the Puritan period, these studies had for Milton in his capacity as a public servant, as an interpreter of the events of his own time, as a historical scholar, and as a poet a very special and highly important object. On the one hand his understanding of military detail enabled him to follow the military history of the Commonwealth, to deal with former campaigns not as an amateur but as an expert, and finally to work into *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained* a body of military minutiae calculated to make them not less competent in this respect than the epics of antiquity. On the other hand the study of war in its large significance as a phase of human history merged with the general political, moral and philosophic interests of Milton and strengthened his grasp on the fundamental issues with which he was concerned both as a statesman

and as a poet. This last aspect of the subject is involved in the general topic of Milton's philosophy and statesmanship, which is too comprehensive to admit of treatment here. What I propose to do is simply to approach the military elements in Milton's work from the standpoint of military science proper, illustrating them by reference to the sources from which they are derived. It is the poetry which primarily concerns us, but a preliminary glance may be taken as a prose work too much neglected in the estimate of Milton's accomplishment, the unfinished *History of Britain*.

It is a significant fact that Milton, while considerably reducing the legendary element in his story, however picturesque, endeavors to give as nearly complete an account as possible of all the battles and campaigns. The following passage describing the battle of the Romans under Agricola with the British at Mons Grampius illustrates his occasional minute handling of military detail.

But first he orders them on this sort: Of eight thousand auxilliary foot he makes his middle ward, on the wings three thousand horse, the legions as a reserve, stood in array before the camp; either to seize the victory won without their own hazard, or to keep up the battle if it should need. The British powers on the hillside, as might best serve for show or terror, stood in their battallions; the first on even ground, the next rising behind, as the hill ascended. Agricola doubting to be overwinged, stretches out his front, though somewhat of the thinnest, in so much that many advised to bring up the legions: Yet he, not altering, alights from his horse, and stands on foot before the ensigns. The fight began aloof . . . etc.

The whole account is taken almost literally from Tacitus (*Agricola*, 36), the significance of Milton's handling lying in his incorporation of it *in toto*, and of his comprehension of the points of strategy involved. In one instance he abbreviates an expression of Tacitus "veritus ne in frontem simul et latera pugnaretur" by translating it into more technical terminology, "fearing to be overwinged." Equally explicit is the long narrative of Caesar's conquest (188 ff.), which is reproduced from the Commentaries with a full account not only of the actual fighting but of the marches, military constructions, and manoeuvrings on land and sea as well. For the campaigns not reported by the Roman historians the materials available to Milton were scanty and his accounts are correspondingly so. There can, however, be no doubt that had the history been continued to a period for which definite data were to be had,

the military feature would have bulked very large indeed. It is clear also that Milton would have handled the wars of his countrymen, not after the fashion of romance, but in the scientific spirit of Xenophon or Caesar. He had aimed to write history as he had read it, and to embody in his work the lessons of experience from all fields of public activity. We have already seen how in the Commonplace Book he recorded among the memorabilia from his historical reading principles and exempla strictly military in character, along with those of general political and moral significance. These notes may serve to guide us in defining the purposes of the *History of Britain* and in estimating the emphasis which would have been given to various aspects of the subject.

We are now in a position to understand more exactly the significance of the military elements incorporated in the poems. They occupy, to be sure, a subordinate place in Milton's carefully thought out schemes of values, as he himself suggests in the invocation to Book IX of *Paradise Lost*, describing himself as one

Not sedulous by nature to indite
Wars, hitherto the only argument
Heroic deemed, chief maistrie to dissect
With long and tedious havoc fabled knights
In battles feigned (the better fortitude
Of patience and heroic martyrdom
Unsung), or to describe races and games,
Or tilting furniture, emblazoned shields,
Impreses quaint, caparisons and steeds;
Bases and tinsel trappings, gorgeous knights
At joust and tournament.

The passage is expressive of Milton's dissatisfaction with a purely chivalric and fictitious subject matter and of his sense of the superior significance of spiritual as compared with material issues. In spite of this, however, he found himself much concerned with the lower argument of physical arms and battles, and his attitude toward this material was by no means one of indifference. On the one hand it called forth his powers of pictorial imagination, while on the other it gave him an opportunity to introduce the expert knowledge which he had won by scholarly study and observation of the art of war. The result in *Paradise Lost* is an odd but on the whole successful mixture of romance and science.

The first passage of importance in this connection is the one

quoted and analyzed by Masson describing the assemblage of the Satanic hosts on the shore of the burning lake. (*P. L.*, I, 530-787). The main elements in this description are purely literary and imaginative. In elaborating his picture in its larger aspects Milton has evidently laid under contribution not only material visualized from epic and romance but his recollections of the actual pageantry of war, as he had read of it in history and seen it in the embattled armies of his own time. Thus we have such universal and poetic images as the unfurling of the imperial ensign at the war-like sound of clarion and trumpet, the forest huge of spears and thronging helms, the shout that tore Hell's concave, the waving of ten thousand banners in the air. But Milton has not rested content with these generalities. He has endeavored to give the picture a more specific martial coloring by introducing touches of archaeological detail and by discreetly mingling the technical terminology of ancient and of modern war. The shields are "serried," i. e. interlocked as in the Greek and Roman battle formations; the troops move forward in perfect phalanx to the Dorian mood of flutes and soft recorders, the last detail being adopted from the classical descriptions of the use of these instruments for battle music among the Greeks.¹⁷

Then they stand "a horrid front, with ordered spear and shield" (compare the command "Order your arms," to be found in all the English text-books) before their chief who

through the armed files
Darts his experienced eye, and soon traverse
The whole batallion views.

Finally, as he prepares to speak,

their doubled ranks they bend
From wing to wing, and half enclose him round.

A second suggestive passage (*P. L.*, IV, 766-789), also cited by Masson is the description of the angelic night-watch about the Garden. Milton has made Gabriel send out a scouting expedition in two detachments with perfect military precision, sharpening the

¹⁷ Xen. *Cyrop.* lib. 7, 178 A: Aelian, cap. XI etc. Cf. the discussion of Synapsmos in the English translation of the *Tactics* by John Cruso, 1616, p. 81.

epic particularity of the account by working in numerous technical though familiar terms applicable to such a manoeuver:

“ Uzziel, half these draw off, and coast the south
With strictest watch; these other wheel the north;
Our circuit meets full west.” As flame they part,
Half wheeling to the shield, half to the spear.

· · · · ·
So saying, on he led his radiant files.

The two units meet and “closing,” stand “in squadron joined.”
Face to face with Satan,

the angelic squadron bright
Turned fiery red, sharpening in mooned horns
Their phalanx, and began to hem him round
With ported spears.

In his commentary on these passages Masson is quite right in insisting on the exactness of Milton's language. In one point, indeed the poet is more exact than the biographer. The phrase “with ported spears” Masson and subsequent commentators describe as if it were the equivalent of the modern “port arms,” which would be inappropriate. The military books which Milton read give it correctly as the position intermediate between “carry” and “charge,” the point of the lance or pike being held directly forward, with the shaft at an angle of 45 degrees.¹⁸ There is, I think, one other error in Masson's exposition. He supposes the word “attention” in “Attention held them mute” to be used by Milton in the sense of the modern command. The word appears, however, in Milton's day to have been “Silence.” At least, I do not find “Attention” in the orders of drill in any of the text-books. Finally, there is nothing in the first passage quoted to justify Masson's inference that the Satanic hosts order their arms at the moment of halting without word of command. These, however, are trifling points. The passages do imply, as Masson says, a considerable amount of detailed knowledge of military methods. But their significance is obscured if we labor to find in them proof that Milton had himself at one time been a soldier. His evolutions and

¹⁸ “This posture is performed by holding the pike a half distance between advancing and charging. . . . It is the most aptest and comliest posture for a company to use in marching through a port or gate, and most readiest for to charge upon a sudden.” Ward, *Animadversions*, 224.

terminology are exact because he intended that they should be so. It is entirely unnecessary to assume practical experiences on his part in order to account for any technicalities we find in *Paradise Lost*. The orders of drill are given and defined in every English handbook, often with illustrations which make them clear at a glance. The various postures of pike and musket are described with special minuteness by Ward, and it is to such sources, supplemented by observation, that we may confidently assign Milton's knowledge of the modern detail in the above passages. His hold on this material rests on exactly the same basis as his accurate information regarding ancient discipline with which he intersperses it. Thus the expression "mooned horns" is, of course, the Greek, Roman and Italian but not the English military term, and the line "half wheeling to the shield, half to the spear" echoes the Latin and Greek terminology "ad scutum," "ad hastam" for right and left wheel. Ælian explains these evolutions in detail, giving the classical terms, which his English commentator converts into English as follows: "Battle wheel to the pike; battle wheel to the target." The actual contemporary command, as rendered by Ward, was "Wheel your battle to the right; wheel your battle to the left."

Material analogous to that already cited is to be found in *Paradise Lost* wherever the movements of embattled hosts are mentioned. The most extensive illustration of the composite character of Milton's materials and of the real purpose for which he marshals them is to be found in the narrative of the war in Heaven. The foundation of this narrative is the Homeric battle, with its episodes of single combat and its atmosphere of individual great deeds. But Milton must have realized that in his handling of this material he would from the viewpoint of mere narrative interest fare but ill in comparison with his originals. He would have been as quick as anyone to see that the inequality of the combatants and the impossibility of killing anybody must necessarily rob the conflict of all element of suspense and make the clash of titanic opposites less thrilling, despite his best endeavor, than the conflict of two mortal heroes, fighting with poor human javelins, in the *Iliad*. To remedy this defect he has centered attention on the military spectacle and on the idea, and in elaborating his story he has, as before, combined the most striking and characteristic features of ancient, mediæval, and modern war.

First Abdiel, returning to the loyal angels, finds them full of martial preparations:

When all the plain
Covered with thick embattled squadrons bright,
Chariots, and flaming arms and fiery steeds,
Reflecting blaze on blaze, first met his view.

The element of discipline is strongly accented in the description.

At which command the Powers Militant
That stood for Heaven, in mighty quadrate joined
Of union irresistible, moved on
In silence their bright legions to the sound
Of instrumental harmony, that breathed
Heroic ardour to adventurous deeds
Under their godlike leaders, in the cause
Of God and his Messiah. On they move
Indissolubly firm; nor obvious hill,
Nor straitening vale, nor wood, nor stream, divides
Their perfect ranks; for high above the ground
Their march was, and the passive air upbore
Their nimble tread.

Milton very obviously has here in mind the trained armies of civilized warfare in antiquity and in his own time. The picture of the rebel host, on the other hand, is colored with the hues and trappings of mediæval chivalry:

and, nearer view,
Bristled with upright beams innumerable
Of rigid spears, and helmets thronged, and shields
Various, with boastful argument portrayed.

What follows is Homeric, chiefly, but Milton continues to present through a series of incidental touches just so much of the theory and practice of modern systematic war as was necessary to satisfy his purpose of making this an integral element in the conception. Thus the following lines are designed to suggest the harmony of individual initiative and automatic discipline which Milton had been taught to recognize as characteristic of the ideally trained fighter:

Led in fight, yet leader seemed
Each warrior single as in chief; expert
When to advance, or stand, or turn the sway
Of battle, open when, and when to close
The ridges of grim war.

The image of orderly battallions in battle formation is constantly kept before us.

While others bore him on their shields
Back to his chariot, where it stood retired
From off the files of war.
.
.
.
Far otherwise the inviolable saints
In cubic phalanx firm advanced entire,
Invulnerable, impenetrably armed.

The day's fighting concludes when

On the foughten field
Michael and his angels prevalent,
Encamping, placed in guard their watches round,
Cherubic waving fires,

a picture suggestive of a passage in the *Iliad* but equally applicable to historic war.

The second battle, in the description of which Milton repeats none of the elements thus far introduced, contains the much maligned episode of the invention and first use of artillery, and here we have an even more characteristic evidence of the poet's determination to modernize and make universally representative the war in Heaven. In the description of the novel weapon he skillfully adapts his scientific knowledge to the purposes of poetry.

These in their dark nativity the Deep
Shall yield us, pregnant with infernal flame;
Which into hollow engines long and round
Thick rammed, at the other bore with touch of fire
Dilated and infuriate, shall send forth
From far, with thundering noise, among our foe
Such implements of mischief as shall dash
To pieces and o'erwhelm whatever stands
Adverse.

The same method is followed in the account of the preparation of the guns and powder. And finally the firing of the pieces is described with full consciousness of the actual technique of artillery working in connection with infantry in contemporary war. At Zophiel's command the loyal angels move on embattled,

when, behold,
Not distant far, with heavy pace the foe
Approaching gross and huge, in hollow cube

Training his devilish enginery, impaled
 On every side with shadowing squadrons deep,
 To hide the fraud.

At the order "Vanguard, to right and left your front unfold," epic language for "Wheel off your front by divisions,"¹⁹ the cannon are unmasked.

A triple mounted row of pillars laid
 On wheels (for like to pillars most they seemed,
 Or hollowed bodies made of oak or fir,
 With branches lopped, in wood or mountain felled)
 Brass, iron, stony mould, had not their mouths
 With hideous orifice gaped on us wide,
 Portending hollow truce. At each, behind,
 A seraph stood, and in his hand a reed
 Stood waving tipped with fire; while we, suspense,
 Collected stood within our thoughts amused.
 Not long! for sudden all at once their reeds
 Put forth, and to a narrow vent applied
 With nicest touch. Immediate in flame,
 But soon obscured with smoke, all Heaven appeared,
 From those deep throated engines belched, whose roar
 Embowelled with outrageous noise the air,
 And all her entrails tore, disgorging foul
 Their devilish glut, chained thunderbolts and hail
 Of iron globes.

.
 Foul dissipation followed and forced rout;
 Nor served it to relax their serried files.

Here if anywhere we should be able to trace Milton's indebtedness to his military sources. As a matter of fact we find in Ward, not only all the necessary technical information regarding artillery itself, but also an account of substantially the evolution here described, with an accompanying diagram (reproduced herewith; see frontispiece). Chapter xvi of the second book is entitled "A fifth way of Imbattling an Army consisting of twelve thousand Foot and four thousand Horse, the Ordinance being placed covertly in the midst and also on the wings." The first part of the analysis in the text is as follows:

¹⁹ Cf. Ward, p. 225: "This motion is easy to be performed, for all the file leaders on the right flank are to wheel about to the right, the rest of each file following their leaders; the file leaders likewise to the left flank are to wheel about to the left and then join or close their divisions."

In this first figure following you may perceive at the letter A, four hundred shot [i. e. musketeers] upon either flank before the main battle; these are to surprise the enemy's ordinance which is supposed to be planted upon a hill; further you may observe sixteen batallias, the ordinance being planted in the main battle between the divisions thereof, having four hundred musketeers ordered before them, and by them obscured; and as soon as the enemy is approached within distance, those musketeers are to divide themselves on either hand, so that the shot [i. e. cannon balls] may have free passage to disorder the enemy's troops, upon which advantage the other batallias are to advance forwards, and seriously to charge the enemy in his disorders.

Of the actual employment of this evolution we have an account in Wilson's *Life of James I*, London, 1653 (p. 140. Cited by Keightley, *Paradise Lost*, p. 441):

Anhalt used a more real stratagem that took effect. He brought his ordinance up behind his men invisibly, loaden with musquet-ball; and, when they should have charged the enemy, made them wheel off, that those bloody engines might break their ranks, which they performed to purpose, and forced them to retire into a wood, where, pursuing their advantage, they scattered their main body.

In view, however, of Milton's acquaintance with Ward's volume we may assume that he adopted from it the fundamental plan of Satan's diabolical assault on the courageous but old-fashioned army of the saints of Heaven.

In order fully to estimate Milton's reasons for introducing the artillery episode into *Paradise Lost* it is necessary to consider it, not as an isolated piece of sensationalism, a more than questionable artistic tour de force, nor yet simply as an epic convention of the Renaissance, but in its relation to the total conception of Book vi and indeed of the poem as a whole. The underlying idea of Milton's treatment of the conflict in Heaven is that it should be an epitome of war in general, or rather the archetype of war, according to the Platonic conception expressed by Raphael in his preliminary address to Adam, in which it is suggested that earth is but the shadow of Heaven, "and things therein each to other like more than on Earth is thought." In order to represent this conception to the imagination he had at the same time to be typical and concrete. Thus in describing the cannon he refuses equally to make them of any one particular metal or to leave them of no metal at all. He says they are "brass, iron, stony mould."

And the same method is reproduced in the larger features of the narrative. In defiance of archæological consistency Milton has combined in the picture the characteristic detail of all the great types of warfare among men, fusing them into a large unity of impression which is not the least of his imaginative achievements. Even the primitive combat of the titans is represented, when both armies finally desert their discipline and abandoning civilized arms hurl confusedly at each other whatever crude missiles come to hand. Milton meant to suggest that the last end of war is like its beginning, bestial, anarchic, inconclusive. The utmost refinements of scientific slaughter are but a mask of chaos and can only end in the disruption of the orderly civilization of which they are the product. The significance of the whole is definitely indicated at the close of Book VI, when the Almighty, beholding the confusion, declares that

War wearied hath performed what war can do,
And to disordered rage let loose the reins,
With mountains, as with weapons, armed; which makes
Wild work in Heaven, and dangerous to the main,

and sends forth the Son in majesty to put an end at once to evil and to strife. In the light of this controlling purpose our consciousness of the artistic improprieties of Book VI tends, I think, to disappear. By employing the legendary framework of a war in Heaven, required by his plot and already established in literary tradition, as a vehicle for a large and not unpoetic philosophical idea Milton brings this portion of *Paradise Lost* into harmony with his conception of the whole and justifies the boast that his song pursues

Things unattempted yet in prose or rhyme.

It should be added that in introducing the use of gunpowder Milton is expressing the current feeling of his time that there was in such a weapon something peculiarly diabolic and unnatural. The Renaissance dislike of firearms on humane and chivalric grounds in comparison with the nobler weapons is suggested by the remark of Hotspur's lordling in *Henry IV*,

And that it was great pity, so it was,
This villanous saltpetre should be digged
Out of the bowels of the harmless earth,
Which many a good tall fellow had destroyed

So cowardly; and but for these vile guns,
He would himself have been a soldier.

The intrinsic hellishness of the instrument is thus alluded to by W. Neade, inventor of the combination bow and pike. "Amongst all which, Bartholdus Swart, the Franciscan friar, with his most devillish invention of gunpowder, is the most damnable, and from hell itself invented."²⁰ Had Milton written in our own day he would have ascribed to Satan the invention of poison gas.

After the sixth Book, in which the battle in Heaven is concluded, we find no further military details in *Paradise Lost*, though the wars of the Old Testament are incidentally recorded in Michael's prophetic narrative to the repentant Adam. *Samson Agonistes*, while it resounds with the echoes of heroic deeds, is equally devoid of the elements with which we are concerned. The exploits of a giant, assailing his enemies with the jaw-bone of an ass, scarcely come under the category of the art of war. In *Paradise Regained*, on the other hand, Milton introduces material drawn from his special studies in a way which again illustrates their basic importance in the fabric of his poetry. One essential element in his design in the epic of the temptation was the representation of the civilized world in the characteristic aspects which it wore at the beginning of the ministry of Christ. In the course of the second temptation the Savior is carried by Satan to a mountain whence he beholds with sweeping view the kingdoms of the earth and the glory of them. As the culmination of the first part of this geographical and historical pageant (III, 298 ff.) attention centers on the Parthians, then engaged in a campaign against the Scythians. The spectacle is one of arms, and Milton sketches swiftly but with precision the Parthian armament and mode of war.

For now the Parthian king
In Ctesiphon hath gathered all his host
Against the Scythian, whose incursions wild
Have wasted Sogdiana; to her aid
He marches now in haste. See, though from far,
His thousands, in what martial equipage
They issue forth, steel bows and shafts their arms,
Of equal dread in flight or in pursuit—
All horsemen, in which fight they most excel;
See how in warlike muster they appear,
In rhombs, and wedges, and half-moons, and wings.

²⁰ *The Double Armed Man*, 1625, p. 85.

Here we see Milton dealing with the cavalry and exhibiting for the first time his text-book knowledge of this field. The line "In rhombs, and wedges, and half-moons and wings" is particularly significant, for the poet has chosen, whether correctly or not, to attribute to the Parthians the use of the rather fancy formations described by the Greeks and adopted, at least in theory, by the cavalry of Milton's time. The locus classicus for these formations is Ælian, who explains in detail several varieties of the rhomb and wedge, together with the square, which Milton does not mention here. The Renaissance editions regularly diagram them, and John Cruso's *Militarie Instructions for the Cavalry*, to cite but a single contemporary text, contains fine pictorial representations of these time-honored forms of battle. The half-moon is not described by Ælian as a cavalry formation but as a way of embattling infantry to encounter a rhomb of cavalry. A convex half-moon of foot is also described and pictorially represented. Ward, as a practical soldier, discusses these matters rather briefly. Milton's line presents, with beautiful condensation, the whole pageant of cavalry formation, as his imagination had reconstructed it from the technical descriptions of the authorities.

In the verses which follow the passage just quoted we have an elaboration of the picture into a splendidly comprehensive spectacle of ancient war.

He looked, and saw what numbers numberless
 The city gates outpoured, light-armed troops
 In coats of mail and military pride.
 In mail their horses clad, yet fleet and strong,
 Prauncing their riders bore.

.
 He saw them in their forms of battle ranged,
 How quick they wheeled, and flying behind them shot
 Sharp sleet of arrowy showers against the face
 Of their pursuers, and overcame by flight;
 The field all iron cast a gleaming brown.
 Nor wanted clouds of foot, nor, on each horn,
 Cuirassiers all in steel for standing fight,
 Chariots, or elephants indorsed with towers
 Of archers; nor of labouring pioners
 A multitude, with spades and axes armed,
 To lay hills plain, fell woods, or valleys fill,
 Or where plain was raise hill, or overlay
 With bridges rivers proud, as with a yoke:

Mules after these, camels and dromedaries,
And wagons fraught with utensils of war.

It was with just scholarly discrimination that Milton introduced the military portion of his picture in connection with the rising Parthian power. Having done so he does not return to it except incidentally. The image of Rome is constructed of triumph, architectural splendor, luxury and cosmopolitan imperialism; that of Greece of intellectual and cultural dominion, as was appropriate to the time of which he was writing. But to the Parthian picture he has, against strict archeological probability, transferred the complexity and splendor of Persian, Roman, Carthaginian and Macedonian warfare, making it stand symbolically for the glamor of arms in general, an aspect of earthly glory, which, with all the other enticements—of wealth and power and the pride of human learning—Christ rejects and by rejecting teaches his faithful followers to despise.

In this way, therefore, Milton finds a place even in recounting the triumph of the Prince of Peace, for the introduction of the martial element so firmly fixed in epic tradition.

With this final illustration of the way in which Milton assimilated to the idea of poetry the technical detail given him by his studies in military science, our investigation might perhaps be brought to a close. It is difficult to go further without incurring the risk of vagueness and confusion. Yet there can in general be no question that Milton's consideration of the art of war in the large sense in which it was conceived by the ancients and by the Renaissance, exercised an influence of considerable importance on his broader thinking, entering into his conception of human character and coloring his philosophy of life. It has not, I think, been pointed out that Milton's ideas on the subject of discipline derive something of their quality from the application of this principle in the sphere of arms. "There is not," he remarks in *The Reason of Church Government*, "that thing in the world of more grave and urgent importance throughout the whole life of man, than is discipline. What need I instance? He that hath read with judgment of nations and commonwealths, of cities and camps, of peace and war, sea and land, will readily agree that the flourishing and decaying of all civil societies, all the moments and occasions are moved to and fro upon the axle of discipline. . . . Hence in those

perfect armies of Cyrus in Xenophon and Scipio in the Roman stories, the excellence of military skill was esteemed, not by the not needing, but by the readiest submitting to the edicts of their commander." The quotation suggests that such passages as those already quoted from Robert Ward, together with innumerable illustrations from history, had gone home to him with full effect and had strengthened his hold on a principle which, notwithstanding the rôle which he was called upon to play of rebel against constituted authority, remained an essential element in his thought.

These studies must also have contributed to his reflection on the nature and sources of fortitude. He rejoiced to set down in the Commonplace Book Ward's affirmation that the true cause of valour is a good conscience. He would have exulted, surely, if he had read it, in Monk's chapter, brief as that on the snakes in Ireland, concerning the armor of a musketeer. "The armour of a musketeer is good courage." The entire section from which Milton's quotation from Ward is taken is a singularly fine analysis of bravery and cowardice. Though there is no detailed proof I cannot help thinking that Milton's characterization of the leaders of the infernal legions in Book II of *Paradise Lost* was influenced by it. Ward makes true valor a mean between softness and presumption, describing the extremes in terms which suggest Milton's representation of Belial and Moloch as two types of councillor and warrior. Certainly this passage and the entire body of Milton's study and reflection regarding military morale, the military character, and the qualities of military leadership enter deeply along with many other varied elements into the portrait of Satan in his capacity as generalissimo of the rebel hosts. No one, I think, having freshly in memory Xenophon's clear cut and systematic presentation of military virtue and skilled leadership in the *Cyropedia* or the anecdotes of great generals and their policies collected by Frontinus and Polyænus or the modern discussions of Ward and Machiavelli, can read Books I, II, and VI, of *Paradise Lost* without being conscious of a significant relation between certain features of Milton's delineation and this coherent body of ideas and exempla.

In making these claims for the influence of Milton's military reading on his conception of Satan and his fellow captains I do not, of course, ignore the fact that he had also before his eyes as living models the great warriors and councillors of the Commonwealth. But these figures were themselves assimilated in Milton's

thought to their ancient types and to the ideal conceptions which already dwelt in his mind as the result of meditative study. His portraits of Cromwell, Vane, and Fairfax illustrate this process and contain besides some clear reflections of Milton's specific study of the art of war. Thus in describing Cromwell's virtues and achievements as commander of the armies of the Commonwealth Milton speaks particularly of the fact that he succeeded in attracting the good and brave from all quarters to his camp and in retaining the obedience of his troops "not by largess or indulgence but by his sole authority and the regularity of his pay." "In this instance," he characteristically adds, "his fame may rival that of Cyrus, of Epaminondas, or any of the great generals of antiquity." The sonnet to Cromwell makes allusion to the importance attached by ancient writers to the enjoyment of Fortune as the qualification of a general, a principle which Milton of course disparaged.

And on the neck of crowned Fortune proud
Hast reared God's trophies.

Lines 7 and 8 of the sonnet to Sir Henry Vane the Younger incorporate the oft-quoted maxim that money is the sinews of war, concerning which Milton had quoted an observation of Machiavelli's in the *Commonplace Book*:

Then to advise how war may best, upheld,
Move by her two main nerves, iron and steel,
In all her equipage.

In this poem Vane's generalship is not separated from his activity in council but is made a part of it. The lines just cited suggest his wisdom in those larger policies and principles of war in which the art military becomes one with the art of rule.

The intimate relation between Milton's military studies and his general scholarly equipment, the degree to which lessons and principles derived from the experience of man in arms are incorporated in the moral, political, and philosophical wisdom which is the common basis both of his poetry and his prose, as well as the very considerable amount of detail furnished to his imagination by the minutiae of ancient and modern war, should now be clear. It was inevitable, given Milton's essentially humanistic temper, that what most interested him in this great and characteristic department of man's activity should be its ultimate significance for human life.

In the marshalling of men under the discipline of civilized armies he saw primarily the beauty and effectiveness of order. In the insistence of all wise commanders on the importance of the spirit of the individual fighter in the arbitrament of battle he saw a proof of the superiority of mind over matter. To him as to Robert Ward the real sources of the victorious spirit were moral and religious—righteousness and the consciousness of a righteous cause—and this truth was confirmed by the experience of the generation in which he lived. War, then, constituted for Milton a precious illustration of the operation in man of spiritual forces and of the triumph in human affairs of the almighty will. Yet while valuing war for what it has to give of interest and beauty and insight into man's nobler nature, Milton none the less deplores it as an evidence and outcome of man's fallen state. The cause to which he was most deeply allied was the cause of peace, and we may read an eloquent expression of his point of view in the set of sonnets already cited as illustrations of his sense of the military virtues of the captains of the Commonwealth. Great as these men have been as leaders in war their greater work remains.

O yet a nobler task awaits thy hand
(For what can war but endless war still breed).

Peace hath her victories
No less renowned than those of war.

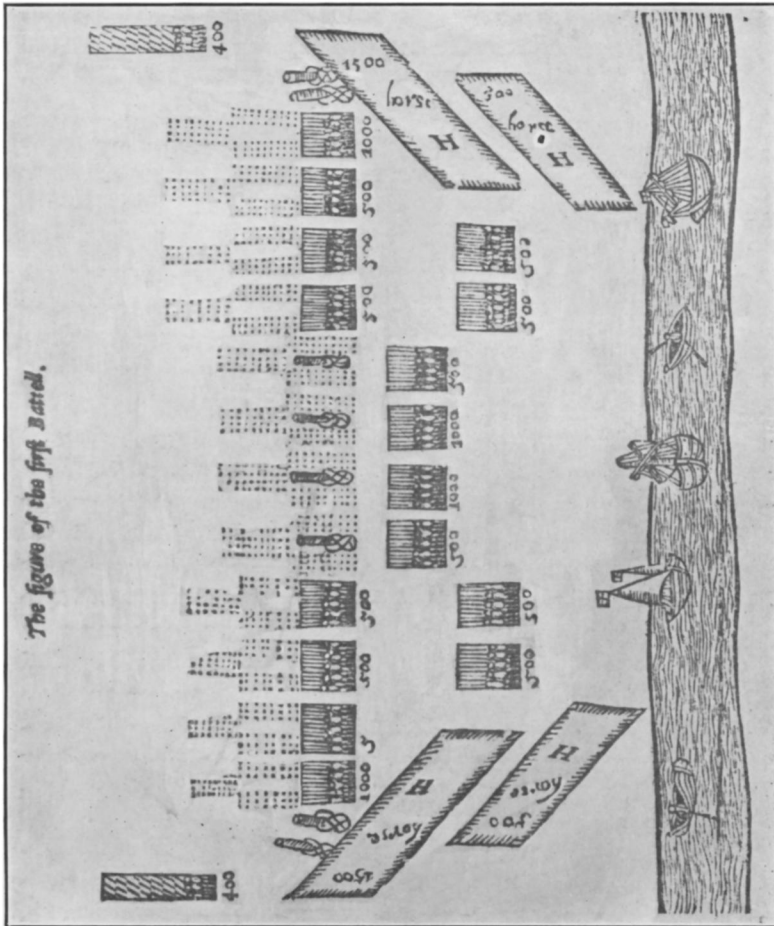
The same idea is majestically embodied in the contrast between the sixth and seventh books of *Paradise Lost*. Creation follows destruction in the order of Heaven as in that of earth. Thus the angels sing of the unimaginable activities of the Almighty as Milton himself had done of the human deeds of Cromwell.

Thee that day
Thy thunders magnified; but to create
Is greater than created to destroy.

In his own studies in the larger policy of war itself Milton had been much impressed with its constructive side. Under the heading "de disciplina militari" in the Commonplace Book he notes "the justice and abstaining from spoil in the army of Henry V and the benefit thereof"; under the title "De bello" he cites Henry's conduct at Harfleur as an instance of "moderate and Christian demeanor after victory." Another section of the Commonplace

Book deals with treaties. These citations suggest the point of contact between Milton's interest in war and his broader study of international relationships. He had read Grotius and must therefore have seen the importance of the restraining usages of civilized warfare as the foundation of a law of nations. For the idea of the larger unity of man Milton had as mighty an enthusiasm as the most ardent of modern internationalists. "Who does not know that there is a mutual bond of amity and brotherhood between man and man all over the world, neither is it the English sea that can sever us from that duty and relation." His hopefulness is tempered, however, both by experience and by the implications of his theology, and he sees no prospect of doing away with war while human nature remains in its present unregeneracy. In his whole attitude toward war Milton is as far removed as possible from the position of the Quakers, with whose ideas in other respects he had much sympathy. His point of view, already made apparent throughout the course of the present study, is, from the theological angle, explicitly set forth in the treatise *Of Christian Doctrine*. "There seems no reason why war should be unlawful now, any more than in the time of the Jews: nor is it anywhere forbidden in the New Testament." The "duties of war," as Milton in his curious way inferred them from the relevant scriptural texts, are said to be, first, that it be not undertaken without mature deliberation; secondly, that it be carried on wisely and skillfully; thirdly, that it be prosecuted with moderation; fourthly, that it be waged in a spirit of godliness; fifthly, that no mercy be shown to a merciless enemy; sixthly, that our confidence be not placed in human strength but in God alone; seventhly, that the booty be distributed in equitable proportions. Regarding which trim reckoning one can only say, in his own words, "This is gospel, and this was ever law among equals."

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ARTILLERY MASKED BY INFANTRY

(From Robert Ward's *Animadversions of Warre*, 1639. The dots represent a plan view of the formations, the rear rank of each battalion being shown in elevation.) (See page 257.)